

# Martin Chemnitz's Enchiridion

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Martin Chemnitz's book *Ministry, Word and Sacraments: An Enchiridion* is a handbook (literal translation from Greek) for the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament published in 1593 (German edition, Latin edition was published in 1603). In Chemnitz's preface to his Enchiridion he states that God has instituted the ministry so that His Church would be built, grown, edified. He declares that ministers are to be God's colabourers that are to plant and water the Church. He also declares that the Word of God is to dwell richly in all wisdom amongst the believers and that all forms of false and erroneous doctrine is to be rooted up and kept far away from the churches of God.

Therefore, so that these things may happen, Chemnitz wrote his Enchiridion. (:16)

Chemnitz's Enchiridion was written in order that those candidates of the ministry may be instructed, indoctrinated and examined in accordance with pure doctrine and also that those already in the ministry may be regularly examined. He desires that his Enchiridion be used as both indoctrination and instruction of pure doctrine and that those less-learned pastors will use it to guard themselves and their hearers from false doctrines, so that all the Church, pastors and hearers may be strengthened and edified. (:16)

Chemnitz's sought to formulate this indoctrination and instruction into one single book so that new and budding churches may have a simple form for instructing, indoctrinating and examining pastors based on the true fundamentals of pure doctrine. Also, that there may be one set standard of equal examination amongst the pastors. (:16-17)

The Enchiridion can be broken up into five parts, the introduction and the four chief parts. The four chief parts are given in answer to the question "what, then, are the chief parts regarding which either one who is to be ordained, or one who already is a pastor of a church, is to be examined?" In other words how are pastors and pastoral candidates to be examined, instructed and indoctrinated?

Chemnitz's answers this by providing four chief parts in which pastors are to be examined, instructed and indoctrinated:

1. The call
2. The doctrine of the Word and of the Sacraments
3. Ceremonies to be observed in church assemblies and in the administration of the Sacraments
4. The life and conduct of ministers of the Church

The rest of the Enchiridion is then broken up into these four sections where Chemnitz will provide detailed answers to these four chief parts.

The format of the Enchiridion is a question-answer structure, in which Chemnitz will provide an informative and Scriptural answer, which length depends on the nature and depth of the question. Almost all of the answers will provide references to Scripture. This is to provide evidence that these answers are Scriptural but also "that pastors themselves should learn to search in the Bible and be able to advance sure testimony of the Scripture on each point." (:17) By doing this Chemnitz has not only provided the reader with a resource of relevant Scriptural verses but also made sure that Scripture remains vital in the instruction, indoctrination and examination process. This is extremely valuable as the study of Scriptures is absolutely necessary for those in or seeking the office of the ministry, as Walther said in his *Pastoral Theology* "the most important study for acquiring pastoral aptitude and fitness is and remains Holy Scripture." (:13)

The importance of Scriptural study can be seen in the Rite of Ordination where the candidate must publically confess that they believe and accept without reservation the Holy Scriptures in all their parts as divinely inspired, written, inerrant, and the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine and life. (LCA Church Rites:140)

To emphasise the importance of Scripture Chemnitz starts Part 2 with a declaration of what doctrine a pastor must teach. A minister is not to preach or teach dreams, visions of his heart, human tradition or what seems right to him, instead he is to teach in the Church the Word of God. (:39)

The introduction to the Enchiridion is a brief but important part as it is the section that deals most directly with the pastor and the office of the ministry. In his opening three questions, Chemnitz, asks what is the nature of the ministry? What is the office of the ministry? And whether it is right to ordain ministers who have been called without prior examination?

In answer to these three questions Chemnitz says. One, the office of the ministry is not a civil government and ministers servants for the Kingdom of the Left. The office is not a business. The office is not a lording of spiritual power over the people of God. Instead the office of the ministry is a spiritual office instituted and ordained by God Himself as a means of performing those necessary functions of the Church. Thus ministers are servants of God and the people of God and stewards of the mysteries of God (Word and Sacrament). (:26)

Two, following on from the first answers, the office of the ministry has been given entrusted to the Church by God in order to feed the Church with the true and pure Word of God, to administer the Sacraments and to administer rightly the keys of the kingdom by either remitting or retaining sins. (:26)

Three, Chemnitz says by no means are we to ordain pastors without appropriate examination. He teaches that pastoral candidates (and pastors for those already ordained) need to be carefully and properly examined in order to determine whether they have a legitimate call, whether they rightly hold the fundamental teachings of the Church, whether they reject false doctrines, whether they are endowed with the necessary gifts to preach and teach, and whether they live a life of upstanding conduct so that they may be an example to the flock. (:27)

Chemnitz will then spend the rest of his Enchiridion providing the content that pastors should be examined, instructed and indoctrinated by in order to determine whether they should or shouldn't be ordained.

The three answers which Chemnitz has provided are all very important. The first two points remind the pastor and the Church what the pastor is and what he isn't and why he is needed in the first place. The final point also reminds pastors, churches and most importantly pastoral candidates of the necessity and importance of seminary training and the process of examination. For as Pope Gregory the Great says "no one presumes to teach an art that he has not first mastered through study." (:29)

As Chemnitz later says in the section on the Call (:34), our God is not a God of confusion by a God of order (see 1 Cor. 14:33) and all things should be done decently and in order (14:40). For the sake of this good order, also for the preservation of pure doctrine and the dispelling of false doctrine, and also for the proper administration of the Sacraments, a person should not publicly teach, preach or administer the sacraments without a proper call. (AC. Art. XIV)

In order to determine a proper call a person must be properly instructed, indoctrinated and examined, hence Chemnitz's writing of the Enchiridion (hence also seminary training, interview process).

The fruits of this process of indoctrination, instruction and examination are publically evident in the Rite of Ordination in the Vows. In the Vows the candidate for ordination confesses publicly that they promise to be diligent in their study of Scripture, to correctly administer the Sacraments, pray for people to nourish them with the Gospel and to lead as example in faithful service and holy living. (LCA Church Rites:140)

In order to have a look at parts 1-4 of the Enchiridion I wish to start from the last first. Chemnitz didn't manage to finish these two parts and so they remain underdeveloped, this is disappointing as the rest of book is an excellent resource for examining and instructing pastor. These two final sections have a lot of potential and would have been very useful if further developed.

Part 3 simply reemphasises how pastors (and pastoral candidates) should be examined with regard to right doctrine. He adds that pastors should also be examined on how they observe ecclesiastical ceremonies and regarding marriage orders. (:157)

In part 4 Chemnitz states that pastors should not only be examined but also spurred to render due faithfulness to their office and to live a pious, honourable and blameless life. Chemnitz wraps up the enchiridion stating that pastors should be reminded with Scripture about how important it is for them to lead a holy life. (:158) Ironically, however, as this section is underdeveloped it provides no Scripture, not even the list from Timothy (1 Tim. 3:1-7) and Titus (1:5-9). As stated above, it is a big disappointment that these sections were not completed, as it would have been helpful to have a resource of this quality which provided both Scriptural references and extensive exegesis on the other verses in Scripture that talk about the life and conduct of a minister.

Part 2 in on the Word and Sacraments and sets out the basics of everything a pastor must know. This section is like a dogmatics textbook and goes through a wide range of theological topics from God to grace, Law to Gospel, Venial Sins, Election, Purgatory and into the specifics of the Sacraments including detail exegesis on the baptism of infants. I found two things very interesting in this section that stood out to me more than the rest of the section (not to diminish the significance of the rest of this section, but these two points made me think more than the others). On page 85 Chemnitz emphasises the necessity to know and understand Predestination and Election and supplies a list of Scriptural verses that pastor should be familiar with. Chemnitz demonstrated to me the high level of importance of this doctrine of Election. And on page 132 Chemnitz states that the reason God attached the keys to the kingdom to ministry was “to indicate that the preaching of the Word is not a vain and useless babbling of words, but that the Holy Spirit is present in this ministry.” I found this interesting as I had never considered the office or the keys in such a way, that God attached the keys to the office in order to show the Holy Spirit presence in the ministers.

Part 1 is the section where Chemnitz goes into detail on what determines a legitimate call. In this section Chemnitz looks extensively at the process of the call including immediate and mediated (without or with means), the issues with the Papist and Anabaptist process of the call, how a congregation is meant to call a pastor and the difference between the office of the ministry and the priesthood of all believers. I found two things in this section very helpful. On pages 29-30 Chemnitz gives five reasons why it is important to have a legitimate call that every minister must know and consider:

1. Because God works through ordinary means and vessels and the call provides proof of this
2. Many gifts are required for the ministry
3. To show the presence of Holy Spirit in the ministry
4. To provide pastors with assurance of their vocation so that they may not be drawn away by fear or persecution
5. That hearers may be stirred in reverence and obedience towards the ministry

Also on page 36 Chemnitz provides five “very weighty reasons” for the public rite of ordination:

1. To provide a public testimony of who has a legitimate call
2. So that the minister is committed in the name of God and the church to whom call him
3. That the pastor vows to be faithful in the ministry
4. The church is reminded that the pastor has divine authority to teach
5. That the church might pray that the Holy Spirit will be with the minister

The final point that I would like to mention in on page 38 under the question “what, then, is the office or work of the ministry of the church?”, within Chemnitz’s answer he provides what I believe to be a perfect summarisation and explanation of the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament:

The office of a minister of the church therefore is, that he diligently study the Holy Scriptures and give himself to reading them, moreover, that he labour in the Word and doctrine, that he feed the flock of Christ and the Church of God; that is, he is to serve the Church with the preaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments and the use of the keys.

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